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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
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Agenda item 6

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS,
INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF
APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL
AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE
SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement submitted by the International Federation
of Human Rights, a non-governmental organization in
consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement,
which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[13 August 1996]

1. The International Federation of Human Rights Leagues and its partner organization the Palestinian Center for Human Rights are concerned about the violations of basic human rights which continue in the occupied Palestinian territories.
2. The Declaration of Principles signed in September 1993, and the subsequent Cairo and Taba Agreements, established a mechanism for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. These agreements did not specifically address the issue of human rights, however. As a result, human rights violations continue to take place, perpetrated by both the Israeli and

Palestinian authorities. The economic stranglehold Israel possesses over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, coupled with the restrictions imposed on freedom of movement in and out of the occupied territories, ensure that Israel maintains a superior position over the Palestinian population. In addition, pressures placed on the Palestinian Authority, by Israel and the international community, have resulted in actions by the Palestinian security not conducive to the establishment of a democratic society free from human rights violations.

Civil and political rights

3. Palestinians face obstructions in achieving their full civil and political rights from acts of censorship, arrest campaigns and improper court proceedings.

4. The 1995 Press Law formally implements restrictions on freedom of expression by regulating all aspects of publication. As a result of this, many owners of publications, editors and authors have imposed an informal self-censorship in fear of retribution.

5. Large-scale campaigns in which hundreds of people have been arrested and detained, without respect for basic rights and due process, have occurred. More than 600 suspected supporters of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad were arrested after the 1996 suicide bombings in Israel, mostly without warrants and were detained in excess of the length allowed by law. Many of these individuals remain in detention.

6. The State Security Courts, established in 1995 by the Palestinian Authority, often implement unacceptable court proceedings, such as: trials without notice, without legal counsel, at night and in undisclosed locations.

7. The recently elected Palestinian Legislative Council has faced considerable obstructions in functioning as a legislative body. The Council must obtain permits from the Israeli military authorities before convening each meeting. On 10 June 1996, the Palestinian Legislative Council meeting was cancelled because Israeli soldiers refused to allow the members from Gaza to exit from the Gaza Strip without being subjected to personal and baggage searches.

8. Approximately 3,500 Palestinian prisoners remain in Israeli prisons in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying power - Israel - to move prisoners into its territory and requires it to hand over prisoners with the onset of peace. Many of these detainees were convicted for political offences by Israeli military courts and are being subjected to severe treatment and conditions.

9. The number of Israeli troops stationed in the occupied territories has not decreased since the transfer of responsibility for law enforcement to the Palestinian Authority. Troops are stationed at the borders, around settlements and at major crossroads. Israeli undercover operations, extrajudicial killings and torture of Palestinians in the occupied territories continue and are well documented.

Social, economic and cultural rights

10. Israel maintains an economic stranglehold over the occupied territories. In particular, the closure imposed on 25 February 1996, under the pretext of security, places inhumane constraints over the entire Palestinian society and is a collective punishment of the Palestinian people. These measures instituted by Israel are in direct conflict with internationally accepted standards of human rights and serve only the interest of Israel.

11. Safe passages between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have not been established, although this is a requirement stated in the Declaration of Principles. This division of the occupied territories inhibits freedom of movement and has grave effects on the economic, social and cultural life of Palestinians.

12. The Israeli-controlled permit system severely restricts the movement of Palestinians requiring medical treatment not available in Gaza, students wishing to study in the West Bank, worshippers bound for the shrines of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron, and those simply wishing to visit friends and family.

13. Israel has cut the number of Palestinian workers allowed to enter Israel from the Gaza Strip by almost 90 per cent since 1987; the unemployment rate of people from Gaza is estimated to be higher than 60 per cent. By Israel retaining control over all imports and exports of goods, the Palestinian gross national product has decreased between 10 and 20 per cent each year, with inflation rates ranging from 10 to 12 per cent.

14. The human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remains a serious threat to the establishment of a democratic government. Although the Declaration of Principles and the ensuing agreements set out the essential framework for achieving a resolution between Palestinians and Israelis, they lack a guarantee of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. Currently, Palestinians live under restrictions and regulations imposed by both the Palestinian and Israeli authorities, contributing to the frustration and disillusionment of Palestinians and, ultimately, the erosion of the peace process.
